

INSTRUCCION DE ENFERMEROS (INSTRUCTIONS FOR NURSES) - A PRECURSOR TO MODERN NURSING?

Purpose of study: This study describes the findings of an analysis undertaken on the first edition of *Instruccion de Enfermeros (Instructions for Nurses)*. These findings are used to examine the persistence of practice in clinical nursing.

Rationale and significance: *Instruccion de Enfermeros* is a Spanish nursing treatise that was first published in 1617. This treatise was used as an instructional guide for (presumed) novice and trainee nurses and outlined foundational nursing concepts and care. Significantly, the treatise: included rationales which were (then) scientifically-based; was peer-reviewed; and was endorsed by Spanish royalty. Five editions of the treatise were published over a period of 50 years. The publication of this treatise intimates that semi-formalized nursing education had commenced in Spain at least two centuries earlier than Nightingale's professionalization of nursing. Hence, the premise of this treatise challenges the origins of modern nursing.

Description of methodology: Traditional historical method is used in the study to critically analyze and interpret the key concepts described in *Instruccion de Enfermeros*. The key concepts will then be compared to today's foundational care in order to identify areas of persistence in practice.

Major primary and secondary sources: The digitized copy of *Instruccion de Enfermeros* and an English translation of the treatise are used for analysis.

Findings and conclusions: The information presented in *Instruccion de Enfermeros* is similar to the structural organization of today's fundamental nursing texts. Key technical skills such as providing comfort, hygienic care, nutritional support, infection control and medication administration are discussed at length in *Instruccion de Enfermeros*. Further, non-technical skills such as interpersonal skills, scope of practice and resource management are also described in the treatise. The study identified that this document includes multiple exemplars of nursing care that persist today. Consequently, this analysis proposes that contemporary nursing practice remains strongly influenced by past practice.